

Letter to the Editor - Wednesday, 25 November 2009

Floods of money for NAMA

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a young boy holidaying on my uncle's small farm in Rhode, Co Offaly, I often accompanied him as he cleared overgrowth and silt build-up from the drains and streams around his land. He was a part-time canal ranger with the Grand Canal Company and was responsible for inspecting and maintaining a section of the Grand Canal in good condition in order to avert any breaches in the banks that could cause possible flooding. Regular bank inspections and maintenance was essential in order to prevent such breaches.

Our forests, peat lands, canals, lakes, rivers, seas and coasts are places of wonder, diversity and beauty. They are the economic engines that provide thousands of valuable livelihoods in farming, food production, recreation and tourism. They are also the source of many of our energy needs and of our precious fresh water.

However, these essential natural assets and resources are currently managed by numerous and often conflicting government departments, agencies and laws which can lead to poor management - often leading to neglect. Now, more than ever we need to promote the security and supply of natural assets and resources which form a major part of the economic backbone of all economic developments.

In order to overcome the enormous threats to our natural world - including pollution, habitat loss, invasive alien species and the worst effects of climate change - we need one unifying national authority to develop policy with local people that will protect, maintain, and restore the health of our natural ecosystems.

To meet the challenges, Just Forests are calling for a new Natural Assets Monitoring Authority - NAMA 2, to be set up by government immediately. This is essential to our future development and will give real-world back up to the government's National Assets Management Agency (NAMA) which only deals with kick-starting the flow of financial services again in Ireland after years of greedy and ill-considered economic developments which has brought the country to its knees in every sense of the word.

Much of the flooding we are experiencing today could have been avoided. It is in many ways the result of neglect and lack of maintenance of waterways, irresponsible planning, greed-driven and inappropriate land use changes coupled with a total disconnect from the wisdom of the natural world. If there is not a serious and urgent attitudinal change in how we manage and use our natural resources we will make the same mistakes again and all the NAMA's in the world won't be worth a penny.

The government has pledged billions of Euros to help clean up the financial mess created by greedy land developers in association with even greedier banks. They are the very ones responsible for our flooding and should be held accountable. Surely, the environment, our living space and our natural assets are worth much, much more.